sector energy and ideas, to deepen the bilateral economic relationship between India and USA. The recommendations of Indo-US CEO Forum are advisory in nature and are presented to both the Governments for their consideration. Department of Economic Affairs has not received any communication from Indo-US Forum regarding the compliance of its recommendations.

Lowering of fiscal deficit

1538. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Confederation of Indian Industry (CH) has stressed on lowering fiscal deficit which would lower inflation, control interest rates and spur growth;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the present fiscal deficit in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Various organizations such as Confederation of Indian Industry (CH) stress on lowering of fiscal deficit from time to time. These are advisory in nature.

(c) The present fiscal deficit of the country as per the Handbook of Statistics, 2006-07 published by Reserve Bank of India, for 2007-08 (BE) is Rs. 2,57,867 crore, which is 5.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

Non-imposition of service tax on certain professionals

1539. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that service tax is not imposed on the services offered by solicitors, lawyers and legal consultants;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when these professionals are likely to be brought under this tax?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) At present, services provided by a lawyer in his professional capacity are not leviable to service tax.

(b) and (c) Service tax is leviable on the taxable services specified in section 65(105) of the Finance Act, 1994. Levy of service tax on a service is a policy decision.

Schemes of Nationalized Banks in Vidarbha region

1540. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the schemes taken up by the Nationalized Banks for helping the poor farmers of Vidarbha;

(b) what is the loaning pattern being followed by these bankers; and

(c) what percentage of the loan goes to the poor farmers in other States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL); (a) and (b) The Government announced a relief package in 6 debt stressed districts in the Vidarbha Region, Maharashtra, which entails waiver of entire interest on overdue loans as on 01.07.2006. reschedulement of overdue loans over a period of 3-5 years